

Filipino Veterans Fairness Act Fact Sheet

The Filipino Veterans Fairness Act of 2013 makes all Filipino veterans fully eligible for veterans' benefits similar to those received by U.S. veterans. This legislation eliminates the distinction between the Regular or "Old" Philippine Scouts and the other three groups of veterans—Commonwealth Army of the Philippines, Recognized Guerrilla Forces, and New Philippine Scouts. Veterans that have received lump sum payments will be eligible for these benefits. Widows and children of Filipino veterans will be eligible for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation just like any other veteran. The Filipino Veterans Fairness Act also directs the VA to take into account alternative military documentation to determine eligibility.

Background

- More than 200,000 Filipinos fought in defense of the United States in the Pacific Theater against the Japanese in World War II, and more than half of them were killed. As citizens of a commonwealth of the United States before and during the war, Filipinos were legally American nationals, and they were promised the same benefits afforded to those serving in the United States Armed Forces.
- In 1946, Congress passed the Rescission Act, a law that stripped Filipinos of the benefits that had been promised them by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The Rescission Act created a wrong that will not be righted unless our nation restores the veteran status it promised Filipino soldiers more than 65 years ago. Today, Filipino veterans are dying at the rate of ten per day, and their average age is 85. There are an estimated 15,000 living Filipino veterans of World War II. For these veterans and their families, I believe the time to act is now.
- The 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act did make a first step toward correcting this mistake: a provision of the law provided that Filipino veterans of World War II who are now U.S. citizens are entitled to a lump sum payment of \$15,000, while non-citizens qualified for a \$9,000 payment. More than \$146 million has been paid out to 16,000 veterans, with thousands of claims still being processed. Under my legislation, veterans that have received these lump sum payments would still be eligible for regular VA benefits. Widows and children of Filipino veterans would also be eligible for regular Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, just as with any other veteran's family.
- Thousands of Filipino veterans' claims have also been denied due to problems with military record-keeping and incomplete recognition of the Philippine military forces. For example, to be eligible for benefits, a veteran had to be on the so called "Missouri List," a U.S. Army roster of Filipino veterans. However, many Filipino veterans and their families who have applied have been denied compensation because they weren't on this list, which was damaged in a fire in 1973. Moreover, administrative distinctions between the Regular or "Old" Philippine Scouts and three other groups of veterans – the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines, Recognized Guerrilla Forces, and New Philippine Scouts – have held up many more veterans' claims. To address these problems, my legislation would eliminate the distinctions between these groups and would also direct the VA to take alternative military documentation into account when determining eligibility.